

The Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Milestone Process

The FAO Community inaugurated the Milestone (O-5) Screening Process in 2011 and implemented the Major (O-6) Milestone Screen in November 2014. Milestone selection is an integral part of the FAO Career Path, and is used as an additional quality cut for placement of officers into high-profile/critical fill Major Staff, Security Cooperation, Attaché and critical community billets. Milestone tours illustrate the operational value and contribution the FAO Community makes to the Navy and the CNO's "Design for Maintaining Maritime Superiority". The Milestone process is essential in ensuring Service, Joint, and Interagency assignments are manned with the best qualified FAOs possessing the required level of maturity, experience, and knowledge.

The Milestone Process is similar to the URL's Command and Major Command Screen Boards. Selection as a Milestone Screened Officer supports selective detailing to Milestone billets. Unlike Command Screening, where you are detailed to a specific command, FAOs are screened primarily on their ability to perform well in any of the three "functional" lines of FAO work: Political-Military Staff, Security Cooperation, and Attaché.

Notionally, FAOs receive two consecutive "in-zone" looks for both Milestone (MS) and Major Milestone (MMS) prior to their in-zone look for promotion to O-5 and O-6.ⁱ Eligibility is based on the FY of their Date of Rank (DoR). LCDRs will be eligible for their first and second MS looks four (4) and five (5) years following their DoR FY, respectively. CDRs will be eligible for their first and second MMS looks three (3) and four (4) years following their DoR FY, respectively. Since the Milestone process is independent from promotion planning, statutory promotion in-zone look may not sequentially follow Milestone screening. Also, there may be situations where new lateral transfer selectees are not afforded the requisite milestone looks before they screen for promotion. In these instances, special/additional looks may be requested in accordance with MILPERSMAN 1301-809.

The average milestone selection rate is approximately 40% of eligible CDRs and 60% of eligible LCDRs. For example, if 20 officers are eligible for the 1st look for MMS 4 officers may be selected. Per MILPERSMAN 1301-809, the board may elect to designate officers as qualified insufficient opportunity (QIO). **If/when** the Community has a requirement to fill a milestone billet with no available milestone screened candidate, officers designated QIO will be considered eligible to serve in a milestone tour, receive a milestone screened letter from the Community Sponsor, and the appropriate additional qualification designators (AQDs). Note: QIOs are not normally notified of their selection as a QIO as not every board President decides to pick them. If an officer is selected QIO at their 1st Milestone look and subsequently is needed to fill a billet, he/she will be notified by the detailer as requirements emerge. The number of selects available for the second look will reflect that additional selected officer from the group the year before (example: If there were 20 eligible officers for MMS 1st first look and 4 were selected and 1 was selected as a QIO and subsequently utilized, the remaining selections would be 3 for the 2nd look instead of 4 for a total of 8 selects of 20 or 40% total across the two looks). Traditionally, if QIOs are not activated, the second look Officers will have a higher likelihood of selection as the numbers of those being considered will be less based on the fact that some in that group under consideration have already been selected. QIO status will expire at the convening of the subsequent board. Officers who successfully screen for MS or MMS **and** promotion are awarded the FM1 and FM3 Additional Qualification Designation (AQD) respectively. After receiving an FM1 or FM3 AQD **and** upon successful completion of a MS or MMS tour, officers are awarded the FM2 and FM4 AQD respectively.ⁱⁱ The FM1 and FM3 AQDs are prerequisites to receiving the FM2 and FM4 AQDs respectively. *An additional requirement for award of FM4 is JFAO Phase II completion.*ⁱⁱⁱ **Selection for CDR Milestone and completion of a CDR Milestone billet is not a prerequisite for selection Major Milestone (i.e. you can 'get well' as a CDR and be competitive for MMS).**

While there has been a strong correlation between milestone screening and selection for promotion, the only factual connection between the promotion and milestone boards is the relative competitive nature of an officer's record against his or her peers. While not a prerequisite for promotion, milestone screen

makes a record stronger by sending a signal to the board that an officer has received additional recognition for future assignment to demanding billets within the FAO community. The milestone complete AQDs (FM2 and FM4) are foremost indicators of a strong record that has been continues to be validated by success in a milestone billet.

The identification process of the billets for the Milestone Billet List is rigorous and aligned with the National Security Strategy, National Military Strategy and the international engagement emphasis of the Cooperative Strategy for the 21st Century. The FAO Community Sponsor has developed discreet criteria used to determine billets for the Milestone and Major Milestone lists. These criteria are used by the FAO Flags to periodically update the milestone lists which in turn then serve two detailing purposes.

1. It prioritizes FAO work and community requirements for the detailer.
2. It allows for additional assignment flexibility (e.g. detaching officers at 24 vice 36 months) in order to assign personnel to priority community billets.

These billets are the best estimate of where the FAO community's talent will be directed in support of current operational demands. Due to the emergent demand signals of international engagement in support of the operational warfighters, critical and high visibility/profile billets are expected to shift with the associated focus of the global POL-MIL environment. Periodic adjustments to the Milestone billet list are expected during the period of community growth as we progress toward FOC by Fiscal Year (FY) 19. This is anticipated to stabilize over time but will always be responsive and reflective to the demands signals of the Fleets and CCMDs.

The FAO Community Management Team in Millington takes numerous factors into account when slating Milestone assignments to ensure the needs of the Navy are balanced as much as possible with the individual's career progression and family desires. Many Navy initiatives govern officer detailing decisions and must be considered during detailing. Exceptional Family Members (EFM), dual military co-locations, unique medical limitations, timing, and the like will be considered and, when at all possible, accommodated when assigning FAOs to Milestone tours. However, there will be circumstances where officers are detailed to Milestone assignments, possibly unaccompanied to ensure that they stay due course. In rare cases, there may also be situations where a Milestone Screened Officer cannot be detailed directly to a Milestone Tour after selection due to timing or other considerations. In this situation, the Officer is still considered due course, and will be slated to a Milestone Billet at the earliest opportunity. In the end, PRD timing, career requirements, and availability of milestone assignments will all influence the slating and detailing to fill these jobs.

Either before or after milestone, FAOs will be asked to serve in non-milestone billets similar to pre- or post-command/milestone assignments for URL officers throughout the Navy. Soliciting undue outside influence on the detailing process is highly discouraged. Clearly articulating the criteria for milestone credit and continuing to practice good detailing discipline that balances the good of the individual and the good of the Navy will optimize the FAO community's contribution to the global warfighter.

Officers may formally decline milestone selection or defer slating in writing to the FAO Community Manager and Detailer, but this is **highly discouraged** as such a decision can lead to unintended/negative consequences.

If an officer declines Milestone, this removes the officer from the list (the "bank") of milestone screened FAOs (removal of FM1 or FM3 AQDs) and they will not be offered another milestone tour at a future date. Also, the written statement declining FAO milestone then becomes part of the officer's permanent record as a Field Code 17 (FC17),^{iv} which is then available for review by the members of any subsequent statutory/administrative career board.

Officers may defer a milestone tour after selection. Deferring officers must decline the milestone tour in writing and accept that they are then second in detailing priority to non-deferring milestone screened officers. By deferring milestone slating, an officer incurs risk for their career progression, and milestone requirements may not be filled in time for the next statutory board.

As a whole, the Milestone Process has greatly improved the health of the FAO community. As an integral part of the FAO Community's Career Path, and as our most similar to command, it translates well to FAO and non-FAO board members alike, and Milestone Tours serve as clear career timing gates for our FAOs and community management to meet when detailing. The Milestone Process is a critical tool to formalize a FAO's Career Path and takes us one step closer to fully professionalizing our Community by FOC.

ⁱ See MILPERSMAN 1301-809

ⁱⁱ FM1 through FM4 are also defined in the Navy Officer Manpower and Personnel Classifications Manual Volume I, <http://www.public.navy.mil/bupers-npc/reference/noc/NOOCSVol1/Pages/default.aspx>

ⁱⁱⁱ OPNAVINST 3701.10C

^{iv} See MILPERSMAN 1070-020

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